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IN THE

RE-INAUGURATION

OF THE

Bronze Statue of George Washington,

AT THE

VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE,

SEPTEMBER 10, 1866.

BY

HON. JOHN LETCHER.

(Published by Order of the Board of Visitors.)

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Professors and Cadets of the Virginia Military Institute and Fellow Citizens :

We have assembled here to-day for the performance of a duty of more than ordinary interest in the history of the Virginia Military Institute. We have met to restore to its original position, Hubbard's beautiful bronze statue of the Father of his Country—the immortal—the unparalleled George Washington. It has been deemed fitting and proper, that the restoration of the statue should be accompanied by such ceremonies as are appropriate to an occasion so interesting, such as will show our appreciation of the exalted character—the unequalled services, military and civil—of this noble son of Virginia, whose highest eulogy is best expressed in the striking language of Gen. Harry Lee—"First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

This Statue was originally placed here in pursuance of a Joint Resolution passed by the Legislature of Virginia, the 8th day of March, 1856; and which is in the following words :

Resolved by the General Assembly, That the Governor be authorized to contract with William J. Hubbard for a cast of Houdon's Statue of Washington, properly executed in bronze, and a faithful copy of the original, to be placed at the Virginia Military Institute at Lexington; and that the Governor be authorized to draw upon the Auditor of Public Accounts for a warrant upon the Treasurer for a sum not exceeding ten thousand dollars, to defray the expenses attending the performance of the contract, when it shall have been in his opinion, faithfully performed.

Accordingly, on the 3d day of July, 1856, the work having been executed, the "copy of the original being faithful," and to the satisfaction of Governor Wise, he, as the Chief Magistrate of the Commonwealth of Virginia, appeared here to perform the agreeable duty of placing it on its pedestal. His address delivered on the occasion, presents an accurate history of the legislation which resulted in the execution of the great work of Houdon, and its location in the Capitol of the State, where it has remained and still remains, admired by all as a splendid work of art, and a faithful representation of the form, features and person of him, whom it was designed to commemorate. That historical narrative is replete with interest to every son of Virginia, and cannot fail to inspire admiration in the breast of every American Citizen, no matter in what section of this great country he may be located. It presents the facts in regard to the legislation of Virginia, the parties designated to select the sculptor—the pains taken in preparing for the execution of such a work as was required—and the brilliant success which characterized and crowned his labors. It presents also the facts connected with the execution of the work before us. All these facts are grouped with power and ability—in language chaste, elegant, expressive, eloquent and appropriate, admirably suited to the subject and the occasion. I adopt it therefore, with the single additional remark, that it is worthy, eminently worthy, of a statesman who has filled the exalted position of Chief Magistrate of Virginia :

Virginia was not unmindful of the grateful duty of transmitting to posterity the personal image of the greatest and best of her sons. Her Legislature resolved as early as 1784, that her Executive should be charged with the trust of procuring "a statue of Washington, of the finest marble and best workmanship, with an inscription on its pedestal in these words :

"The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia have caused this statue to be erected as a monument of affection and gratitude to George Washington, who, uniting to the endowments of the hero the virtues of the patriot, and exerting both in establishing the liberties of his country, has rendered his name dear to his fellow-citizens, and given the world an immortal example of true glory."

This inscription, which we are told was written by James Madison, is as simple in its language as it is sublime in its sentiment. It was to be a monument of "*affection and gratitude*," erected—not to the *man*—but to the "*endowments of the hero*;" and not to the *qualities* alone, but to their "*exertion*," also—the *labors*, the *action*—"in establishing the liberties of his country" and rendering his *name*—not immortal, not famous even, but—"dear to his fellow-citizens." That which it speaks of as "immortal" is not the man nor his name, but "*the example of true glory*" which he had given the world—that, that alone true piety and good taste could dare to call "*immortal!*"

The Governor, Ben. Harrison, selected the two fittest agents, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, then in Paris, to employ the best artist in Europe, and to ornament the monument with proper and fit devices and emblems. The eminent statuary, M. Houdon, was sent to the United States "to see Gen. Washington." Nothing short of ocular inspection would suffice; no painting by Peale would do; the statuary alone, not the limner, could make the proper and fit devices and emblems to ornament the work of his own chisel. With the Artist as well as the State the undertaking was not so much one of contract as it was "a labor of love." The master of fine arts was a lover of liberty and venerated him who was the greatest champion of the rights of man and the freedom of States. He retired from a Royal Court; declined imperial patronage and princely orders; denied himself the profits of the most extensive European orders for "everything which was capital;" left a family poor and dependent; incurred a certainty of loss; and made a pilgrimage, purely of inspiration, to America, to perpetuate the mouldering form of him who alone among men had won the fair title to be called a country's father. His life was insured, and in the event of his death before his return to Paris, 10,000 livres were secured to be paid to his father, mother and sisters. He was about 35 or 40 years of age; but he was an invalid, and this sum to his family was a *sine qua non*, for they had no resource but in his labor; and, though without rivalry in his art, his chief excellence was that he was "disinterested, generous, candid and panting for glory—he was one of the best men in the world." These were the winning characteristics which made him "in every circumstance meriting the good opinion of Washington" in the testimony of Mr. Jefferson.

About August or September, 1785, he arrived at Philadelphia, in company with Dr. Franklin. His materials not having reached Havre when the ship sailed, he was compelled to remain for a time to supply himself in Philadelphia, and thus did not reach Mount Vernon until after September. Washington saluted him immediately on his arrival. He said he was informed of the occasion of his visit, and, though his modesty disclaimed seeking the cause of it, he frankly expressed that he felt "the most agreeable and grateful sensations;" he complimented him by wishing "his mission had been more worthy of the masterly genius of the first statuary in Europe; welcomed him to the seat of his retirement, and promised him every aid in his power." He was at Mount Vernon, probably in the month of October or November, 1785, and returned to Paris before the 4th of January, 1786. *There and then, he modeled the mortal man by actual admeasurement!* He applied the callipers to and made a cast of the entire person. Washington, it is said, was annoyed by the particularity of the copy, but Houdon faithfully persisted; and the hero and the sage, the man of supreme dignity, of spotless purity and the most veiled modesty, laid his sacred person bare and prone before the eyes of art and affection. An actual, exact copy of the material man, Washington, was made by the master modeler, M. Houdon. Thus, the work was original and authentic in the highest and truest sense.

This, though, was but mechanical and mathematical. This was but art collecting its materials, drawing its outlines, framing its skeleton, measuring length of limb, clothing bone with muscle and muscle with skin, so that

"From lines drawn true our eye may trace
A foot, a knee, a hand, a face."

But more was wanting; for, as in painting, the picture may want the coloring, the Titian stroke, the Guido air, the *je ne sçais quoi* of beauty; so in statuary, the form may be there, but

it may not be a breathing form, it may not act, it may not speak, it may not glow with warmth. Deity had breathed into the man the breath of life and given to him the "countenance sublime," and the genius of the divine art had to give to the *morale* the countenance of the *man*. He, Houdon, did it, and *there* in the Capitol of Virginia stands Washington! In Houdon's marble we have the form and feature, the limb and lineament, the configuration and proportion, the stature and posture, and we have, enlivening all, illumining all, the mien and manner and majesty of the man—the breath as well as the body, the grandeur of the moral greatness of the very soul of the living Washington! The very original person, so exactly moulded; the very spirit and intellect and moral man, so caught warm from flesh and blood and so transfused to marble as to make it glow with life and likeness, were taken; the cast of the body was left to the care of his workmen, to be carried to Europe, and that of the face was taken in his own care, he saying, as the story is, "that if that went down in the deep he would go along with it." The figure was in the nude state: it needed costume and drapery and to be decorated with emblems. This is inferred from the fact that Mr. Jefferson, in a letter of the 4th of January, 1786, wrote to Gen. Washington to ascertain his wishes respecting the particular dress and attitude to be adopted. It was not until the 1st of August of the same year that the General replied. The letter is remarkably characteristic of the man. It is diffident—disclaims "sufficient knowledge in the art of sculpture to oppose his judgment to the taste of connoisseurs; he would be perfectly satisfied with whatever might be judged *decent and proper*." These were words of peculiar import in his meaning: "He would scarcely venture to suggest the inexpediency of a servile adherence to the garb of antiquity as opposed to some little deviation in favor of the modern costume, if he had not learned from Col. Humphreys that this was hinted in conversation by Mr. West, to Mr. Houdon. He understood that this taste, introduced in painting by West, was received with applause and prevailed extensively." This, doubtless, mainly decided the character of the costume, which has been so badly criticised by a false taste. Houdon had *seen* Washington; "*decent and proper*" were his idea of the mode. West has conversed with Houdon. Two genuine Americans, of pure, patriotic taste, Jefferson and Franklin, were superintendents of the work. These circumstances, and the fact that Houdon was a true master, determined the dress, the attitude and the emblems. The figure is preserved by the tight fit of the dress, so as to display the outlines of the body and of every limb. The State resolves were looked to, and the Governor, it is seen, was ordered to procure a statute of "*General Washington*;" and in the order to Mr. Peale, he was to take a copy of the picture "*of the late Commander in Chief*," to be transmitted to Mr. Jefferson. The "*General*," the "*Commander in Chief*," was to be represented. The costume, therefore, is that of the *military man*. He is in the *regimentals of General Washington*. But he was more than military, he was *citizen* too—a *citizen soldier* General and Commander in Chief. He, therefore, has not the sword belted on; but, though in military coat and epauletts, though booted and spurred and gloved for service, he has a *citizen's cane* in his right hand, and the unbelted sword hangs in view but not on his person. *Peace* was the end of his warfare—the conquest of right his aim—the sword was *irksome* to him, and he laid it aside whenever and wherever he could rest for a moment on a stay of civil life.

The costume is "*decent and proper*," and the emblems are as significant as they are simple. They tell their own meaning. I have not been able to find any record of their design, by Houdon himself or by Mr. Jefferson or other person, and I, therefore, am left to give my own interpretation of them. Washington stands on the mother earth, the plough-share placed on the left by his foot. These signify the idea of "*country*"—that most endearing and precious word of patriotism. They imply also the favorite, Cincinnatus-like occupation of the man, agricultural tillage, the arts of husbandry and humble industry and labor, the foundations of prosperity, of plenty and providence, and independence for a people; and they point higher up to God, reminding us of the source whence we came, and of our lot in life, and to what we must return; man's origin, his duties, his dependence and his end. Upright on the plough-share rests the baggage roll of a tent or marquee, in a bundle of fasces bound around by broad canvass straps, forming a pillar, denoting *union and strength*—the idea of the "*E pluribus unum*." On that pillar hangs the sword at rest; over it is thrown Washington's military mantle, and over all he leans upon that pillar with his left arm. God! man! mother earth! country! dependence upon industry, labor and union! These are the ideas conveyed to me by these emblems.

The attitude of the person is that of a mood of high thought, calm but elate and roused to attention, taking a far-seeing survey of distance and expanse before him. His expression is grave, but serene; composed, but earnest and intense; still, but prepared for action; waiting, but ready at a moment; he is in standing repose and cooling the brow with bare front, with no chapeau in sight, but with sword within reach. Wisdom and providence are in his look, and a consciousness of collected strength in his whole posture and presence. Firmness sits upon his

lip and chin, fortitude on his cheek, thought on his brow; and, yet, a surpassing sweetness pervades the whole face, which makes us feel

“How awful goodness is, and see
Virtue in her shape how lovely.”

Such is the chaste and elegant description of the great work of Houdon. Now I connect with it the trials and difficulties encountered by Hubard in making the work before us, and which is destined to perpetuate his name to the latest posterity.

The Houdon copied nature and followed truth, and will bear comparison with any single figure of the Italian or Greek school. Whilst it is simple in its taste of costume, drapery, and emblems, it is most cunningly wrought; it is original and real, not imaginary; it is christian, not heathenish; it is American, not classical; it is human, not mythological. Such is Houdon's Washington—so well did that one among the best of men and most eminent of artists transmit the form of the greatest human benefactor to posterity.

And its genius gave it attributive virtue. It has caused art in another. Houdon has transmitted Washington, and our own Virginia artist, Hubard, has transmitted Houdon. The bronze copy which we this day put upon its plinth is exact, and but little lower in the dignity of art than the great original in marble. Time and its mutilation had assailed the marble; pieces had already been broken off; fire was hourly threatening to destroy the work of the master's hand, and the only exact and authentic form of the mighty original, when the poetry as well as piety and patriotism of our own artist sought to insure the perpetuation to posterity by a perdurable copy in bronze! Like Houdon's, Hubard's was a passionate performance. He is both a painter, and modeler in statuary, and artist-like, is poor, with a wife to cherish and family of children to nurture and educate. He too, “panted for glory,” and saw the chance to snatch it in a cast from Houdon, as Houdon had caught it from Washington. The difficulties were almost insurmountable. No bronze statue had been cast whole in the United States. He had no furnace like that for the statue of Louis XV. There were no experienced men of Munich in our country to mix and melt and mould the metal; and to make the section moulds, such as Italians use, was itself almost an art. With these obstructions and but small means, nothing daunted, generously he essayed the pious undertaking. He superintended the making of the moulds in person, at considerable cost of labor, money and time. This was but the beginning of his expense. He had to build a furnace, now unfit for any other operation than that of the fine arts. This was not the end of the beginning of the trial, risk and outlay. He had to employ workmen who came from abroad, and to procure materials. The advances took nearly all his available means. But at last the furnace was heated; the metals were mixed and molten; the moulds were embedded; the glowing flood was poured into them, and—the cast was a failure! The first was broken up, and again the same was done, with a like result—a *second* failure! This would have stopped the efforts of an ordinary man. Not so with Hubard. He had spent thousands; had lost all. His family was made anxious, and he was much embarrassed.

But the word “*fail*” was not written in his vocabulary. A friend in Richmond—I wish I had permission to mention the name of this benefactor of the arts, for all honor as long as the bronze shall last! a friend in Richmond advanced the means of a *third trial*. The day, the 23d February, A. D. 1856, arrived for it to be made; the anxiety of the artist was intense; a few friends were present, to mingle their hopes and fears with his, and to witness the opening of the iron flood-gate of the furnace. Two failures had taught the necessary precaution; the mould of Washington lay firmly waiting, embedded solid under the lip of the lava spout; the vent holes were carefully opened for the flying gas and heated air; the ponderous lever in slings broke away the furnace gate; and the fiery current came red and rushing in and the liquid bronze poured on until the mould was full and laid a boiling lake, muttering and bubbling whilst it slowly cooled to a solid sea of brass with its jagged waves fixed. The cast was raised and lo!—there was the perfect copy in bronze of the Houdon, which we see before us! All hail thou triumph of Virginia's art and patriotic devotion, well mayest thou come out of the third trial, a perfect model of the form of him

“Whom ‘Nature designed for a hero's mould,
And e'er she cast him let *not* the stuff grow cold.’”

This statue, thus formed and fashioned by Hubard—placed here by the order of the General Assembly of Virginia—its erection superintended by her chief

magistrate in person—retained its position, until the memorable 13th day of June, 1864. The day previous, the Federal army, under the command of Gen. David Hunter (a Virginian by birth!) entered Lexington, and in less than twenty-four hours after he took possession, the beautiful and imposing buildings of the Virginia Military Institute were in ashes, having first been despoiled of the Philosophical and Chemical Apparatus, and robbed of all that could be appropriated as trophies—Gen. Hunter being upon the spot, superintending the burning in person; and all this on a Holy Sabbath morning!! Under his superintendence this statue with its tablet was displaced from the pedestal and removed to Wheeling, in West Virginia. There it remained, until the Legislature of that State (all honor to it, for the noble deed!!) directed its return to its appropriate place.

The spirit which marked the conduct of General Hunter on that occasion, was in admirable harmony with that spirit which warred on the arts and literature of the 5th century, in the Roman Empire, and has secured for him an immortality, that will be as enduring and undying, as attaches to him who burned the temple of Ephesus. Some men court notoriety—and are utterly indifferent to the character of that notoriety. Whether General Hunter is one of this class I know not. But certain it is, if he was in quest of notoriety, when he came here at the head of the army, he has abundant reason to be satisfied with the brilliant success which has attended his efforts. No Virginian will ever forget either his nativity or his name,

“While the earth bears a plant, or the sea rolls a wave.”

On the same, never-to-be-forgotten day, Washington College, endowed by the immortal Father of his Country, was sacked—its apparatus demolished, its libraries destroyed, its buildings defaced, and preparations were made for giving it also to the devouring element. “A sober, second thought,” and it was spared. It is source of gratification and pride to our people, that its buildings still stand, in all their majestic beauty, and that one connected with Washington by close ties, honored, loved, cherished and respected for the noblest qualities of head and heart, presides over and directs its operations skilfully, ably and successfully.

What a beautiful conjunction—Washington and Lee! Well may Virginia be proud of these sons, for their exalted virtues, their eminent services, and for the possession of all those qualities that elevate and dignify human nature. Young men, endeavor to follow the example they have set, and strive to emulate their virtues, that you too may win the love and affection of your countrymen.

And here let me do justice to two of the officers in that army who did not hesitate to condemn in decided language, the destruction of this property. I allude to Generals Averill and Crook, soldiers by education and by profession, who had been taught to respect arts and literature, science and learning. Their independence in condemning the outrage commanded the respect, and won the gratitude, of our own people, and of all right-minded men throughout the State and the nation. Now that the war is ended and peace has been proclaimed, it is not a matter of surprise, that these officers should now be found in the ranks of the supporters of President Johnson, using their influence and employing their efforts to secure the restoration of the Union, and to revive the era of harmony and good will between the sections recently arrayed in battle against each other. “They prefer to act with those who are right now, even if they were once wrong, rather than with those who were once right and are now wrong.”—They prefer that the past shall be forgotten, in order that the country may have

a future. They know it can never have a glorious and successful future, while the past remains forgotten.

A brief history of the origin, progress and brilliant success of the Virginia Military Institute seems to me peculiarly appropriate to this occasion. This history I find prepared by the distinguished superintendent. I adopt it, and commend it, for the important and reliable information it presents, in regard to the character of the institution :

The Virginia Military Institute was established, and is supported by the State of Virginia. It was organized in 1839, as a State *Military and Scientific* School, upon the basis of the United States Military Academy at West Point, and has been in successful operation for twenty-six years. The cadets admitted consist of two classes, *State* and *Pay* cadets. The Institute supplies to the State cadet his board and tuition : and in consideration thereof, he is required to teach two years after graduation. The Pay cadet is at his own expense, which averaged before the war \$375 per year, for every charge, *including clothing*. The State cadets are selected from those who are unable to bear their own expenses. The Institute has always had as many pupils as its buildings would accommodate, and numbered at the close of the war, 50 *State* and 250 *Pay* cadets. Applications are made, by letter, to the Superintendent prior to the 1st of July, each year, and appointments are made for both classes of cadets by the Board of Visitors, respect being had to their due apportionment among the several districts of the State.

When the vacancies in the Institute justify it, appointments are made from other States.

The State makes an annual appropriation for the support of the Virginia Military Institute of \$15,000. This sum supplies *tuition and board* to the *State* cadets *without charge*, and supports—by the aid of the tuition fees, and the income from vested funds—the Faculty. In 1860, a donation of \$20,000 was made by Gen. PHILIP ST. GEORGE COCKE, for the endowment of the chair of *Agriculture*, and in the same year, a donation was made of \$11,500 by Dr. WILLIAM NEWTON MERCER, of Louisiana, to endow the chair of Animal and Vegetable Physiology, applied to *Agriculture*. A donation was made at the same time by Mrs. E. L. CLAYTOR, of Virginia, of \$5000 to erect a *Hall of Natural History*.

The Virginia Military Institute has just placed itself before the public, as a *General School of Applied Science*, for the development of the *agricultural, mineral, commercial, manufacturing and internal improvement* interests of the State and Country, when the army of Gen. Hunter destroyed its stately buildings, and consigned to the flames, its library of 10,000 volumes, the Philosophical apparatus used for 10 years, by "STONEWALL" JACKSON, and all its chemicals. The cadets were then transferred to Richmond, and the Institution was continued in vigorous operation until the evacuation of Richmond, on the 3d, of April, 1865.

This extract furnishes full and valuable information, respecting the organization—the mode of selecting the Cadets—the objects of the School—the means provided for maintaining it, and an appropriate reference to the destruction of its buildings, its apparatus and its Libraries. As part of the history of our times, it is instructive, and therefore I have deemed it advisable, to embody it in this Address, and as far as I can, contribute my aid, in transmitting it to posterity, as a useful lesson. The execration which has followed the destruction of this Institution, should admonish all military leaders, to steer clear of war upon arts, science and literature. The destruction of institutions of learning, never has, and never can add any thing to the power, and influence, and respectability of an army. It never has produced practical results, in bringing a war to a close, or relieving it of its horrors.

In September 1865, the Board of Visitors held a session in the City of Richmond, and with the cordial approval and concurrence of Governor Pierpoint, proceeded to the work of re-organization by supplying vacancies in the Professorial corps. This work was most happily accomplished in the selections of General CUSTIS LEE and Colonel BLAIR, distinguished graduates of West Point, and Capt. BROOKE, late of the Confederate Navy—all gentlemen, greatly distinguished for their learning and ability—and admirably suited for the positions

to which they were assigned. Besides these, the Assistant Professors are young gentlemen who have graduated with high honor in the School, and who are distinguished for ability, and have had experience as teachers, in the various branches of learning. The Professorial corps, as now organized, has never been equalled in the history of the institution, and will compare most favourably, in ability, in experience, in learning, in scientific and literary attainments, in devotion to their profession, in all respects indeed, with the Faculty of any institution of learning in our land—North or South.

Of the Professors, nearly all were engaged for a longer or shorter period in the military service, during the war through which the country has passed, and all acquitted themselves most creditably. Three of the Professors—Gen'l JACKSON, Gen'l RODES, and Col. CRUTCHFIELD; and two of the Assistant Professors, Capt. MORGAN and Lieut. CRITTENDEN, were killed, during the war. Of those who had been in the Institute as Cadets eight hundred were in the Confederate service, one hundred and twenty-five of whom were killed in battle, and three hundred and fifty wounded. Since the organization of the institute in the year 1839, two thousand have matriculated, of whom five hundred and twenty-seven were State Cadets. Five hundred and ten have graduated, and of these, one hundred and seventy-seven were State Cadets. Of these graduates, one hundred and forty-six have been engaged in the business of teaching. Thirty-seven have devoted themselves to the profession of Civil Engineering—fifty three have applied themselves to farming—and thirty have devoted themselves to merchandizing.

From its organization to the present time, the Institute has always been full—never having had accommodations to supply the demand for admission. Since the destruction of the buildings, such has been the zeal, industry, and perseverance of its accomplished and energetic superintendent, that accommodations are now prepared for two hundred Cadets, and most probably that number will be in attendance, during the session now commencing.

The Virginia Military Institute is therefore once more established. Like the Phoenix it has risen again from its ashes. Its career of usefulness, in the educational world, has been resumed. Its power and influence, will be again felt throughout Virginia and the South, and notwithstanding the passions and prejudices, which the war excited, it will have its Cadets from the North and West also. Brilliant as has been its past history, its future is destined to be far more successful and glorious. A new era has commenced, the sphere of its influence has to be greatly enlarged, and its blessings and benefits, like the dews of heaven, are to be generally diffused throughout the land.

Such in brief, is the history of the Virginia Military Institute—to the time of its destruction—such the record it presents, of distinguished service to the State that organized and sustained it, nurtured and upheld it. How glorious is that history! how honorable that record! Such, too, is its present position, and such the efforts to resuscitate it, and restore it to its original sphere of usefulness and distinction amongst the schools of learning in the South. It will be successful, and the Military Institute of the future, will far excel the Military Institute of the past. Come up then to its support. Give it your countenance and encouragement—give it of your material means. It has been, and it is an ornament and an honor to Virginia, and it is deserving of all the support you can extend to it.

One name is now missing from the Professorial roll of this Institution. The day when STONEWALL JACKSON's native State most needed his services—when all

her people were looking to him for deliverance from the troubles in which they were then involved—when the hopes of the Confederacy were centred in him—when the prayers of a people, morning and evening, ascended to Heaven, imploring God's blessing, protection and preservation of him—when the love and affection of a whole people were entwined about him,—at that moment he is removed from amongst us. He sleeps in yonder Cemetery. His resting place is hallowed ground, and will be visited by countless thousands, who have been impressed with the genius of the man, as exhibited in the recent civil war—with his dauntless courage—his pure and spotless character—his christian virtues—his rigid simplicity—his disinterestedness and his self-sacrificing spirit and disposition. The dauntless heart was stricken down in the hour of victory, at Chancellorsville :

“ In pride, in all the pride of woe,
We tell of him the brave laid low,
Who for his birth-place bled.”

He is gone. This institution shall know him no more, as one of its honored Professors. His voice shall not be heard again, in the way of admonition, and in imparting instruction. It is stilled and stilled forever in death.

He has filled the measure of greatness—he has won imperishable renown, and his name and fame will live forever. He loved Virginia with his whole heart, and died for her, in what he believed to be the cause of truth and right. His example is left to us, for imitation—and no brighter or better example can be held up before the young, and rising generation. He was a man of labor, and in the changed condition of affairs, all our people now must practice industry. He was economical, and in the depressed condition of our affairs, financial, commercial, agricultural and mechanical, it behooves us to practice a rigid economy. He was systematic in business, prompt, resolute and active—essential elements of success. He was patient, untiring, never postponed the work of to-day, for a more convenient season. He was gentle, kind, charitable, and studiously polite—always performed his duty faithfully, and courteously. In all these respects he had no superior, and his character and life, therefore, is worthy of emulation. “Take him all in all, we never shall look upon his like again.”

“ While the tree
Of Freedom's withered trunk puts forth a leaf,
Even for thy tomb, a garland let it be.”

The friends of this institution are greatly indebted to the Executive of Virginia, who has honored this occasion with his presence, for the zeal, promptness, and public spirit displayed by him, in securing its re-establishment, and aiding by all the means within his power, its re-construction. We honor him for his services in this behalf—for the aid and encouragement he has given—for the important and valuable services he has rendered to the great cause of scientific and practical education. In the name of the Board of Visitors I return him our thanks.

And in closing this branch of my imperfect address, it is both a duty and a pleasure, to thank the General commanding the army of the United States, for the interest he has manifested, and the favor he has shown, in furnishing the arms necessary for the successful operations of the institution, and in restoring the Cadet battery.

The war has ended. The bow of peace spans the horizon. We are again a united people. Let the passions, the prejudices, and revengeful feelings, which

have existed between the sections, and which were intensified by the civil war through which we have passed, be consigned, in solemn silence, to a common grave, there to sleep forever. Let the party who have triumphed in the recent struggle bear in mind, "that the hour of victory should be the hour of magnanimity." The past is gone and should be forgotten—the present is upon us, and should be wisely improved, with a view to the future and all it has in store for us; if we are true to ourselves, true to patriotism, true to our own interests, true to the Constitution, true to State Rights, and true to the principles upon which the Union was founded.

There is another who on an occasion like this, should not be forgotten. He had served the country with fidelity and devotion, in the army of the United States. He had rendered distinguished service, as Representative and Senator in Congress, and had performed honorable duty, as Secretary of War, under President Pierce. He is a man of talent, education, accomplishments and most polished manners. That man was the President of the Southern Confederacy, and represented the feelings, the principles, the interests, and purposes of the Southern people.

" His life was gentle,
And the elements so mixed in him,
That Nature might stand up and say
To all the world—Here was a man."

Mr. Davis now languishes in prison—his constitution shattered—in feeble health, and demanding a trial. He occupies the position of the Duke of Milan, pleading his cause before the Emperor, Charles V :

" I come not Emperor to invoke thy mercy,
By fawning on thy fortune ; nor bring with me
Excuses or denials. I profess
(And with a good man's confidence, e'en this instant
That I am in thy power,) I was thine enemy ;
Thy deadly and vow'd enemy, one that wish'd
Confusion to thy person, and estates ;
And with my utmost pow'rs, and deepest councils,
Had they been truly follow'd, further'd it ;
Nor will I now, although my neck were under
The hangman's axe, with one poor syllable
Confess, but that I honored the French king
More than thyself, and all men.

* * * * *

Nor come I as a slave,
Pinion'd and fetter'd, in a squalid weed,
Falling before thy feet, kneeling and howling,
For a forestalled remission ; that were poor,
And would but shame thy victory ; for conquest
Over foes is a captivity,
And not a triumph. I ne'er feared to die,
More than I wished to live. When I had reach'd
My ends in being a duke, I wore these robes,
This crown upon my head, and to my side
This sword was girt ; and, witness truth, that, now
'Tis in another's power, when I shall part
With these and life together, I'm the same :
My views then did not swell with pride ; nor now
They shrink for fear—Know, Sir, that Sforza stands
For either fortune.

* * * * *

I've said,
And now expect my sentence."

To this plea Charles replied, and the reply was such as became a ruler, elevated in soul and in sentiment. "There is an indissoluble union, between a magnanimous policy, and the solid rewards of public prosperity and felicity," saith the great, the glorious, the magnanimous Washington. Charles replies:

"Thou hast so far
Outgone my expectations noble Sforza,
(For such I hold thee,) and true constancy,
Rais'd on a brave foundation, bears such palm
And privilege with it, that, where we behold it,
Though in an enemy, it does command us
To love and honor it.—By my future hopes,
I'm glad, for thy sake, in seeking favor,
Thou did'st not borrow of vice her indirect,
Crooked, and abject means; and for mine own
That (since my purposes must now be chang'd
Touching thy life and fortunes) the world cannot
Tax me of levity in my settled councils;
I being neither wrought by tempting bribes,
Nor servile flattery; but forc'd unto it
By a fair war of virtue.
All former passages of hate be buried;
For thus with open arms I meet thy love,
And as a friend embrace it;"

This plea of Sforza, Duke of Milan, frank, manly and independent, and the answer of Charles, magnanimous, tolerant, and forgiving, points a moral.

And now, my friends and countrymen, I desire to give a practical turn to the ceremonies of this day, in the hope that I may contribute somewhat to the great interests of the country, in which we live, and with whose destiny our future is indissolubly connected, for weal or woe.

We have passed through a terrible strife, which has brought sorrow and distress upon many a happy household, which has prostrated the business of the country, checked the development of its resources, paralyzed its energies, and visited upon countless thousands, poverty and ruin. I would be false to all my convictions, false to the honored mother who gave me birth, false to every obligation of duty and patriotism, if I could on an occasion like this, fail to raise my voice in her defence, against the imputation, that she and the South were chargeable with originating this war. It is not so my countrymen. No honest man can, in my opinion, lay his hand upon his heart, appeal to God for the truth of his convictions, and conscientiously declare that this war is justly chargeable to us. It was forced upon us, and mainly by the political parsons, and the politicians of New England. But for their unceasing assaults upon the institutions of the South, continued year after year, we should have never had a war between the sections composing the Union.

For years past, it has been apparent to the most casual observer, that the controversy thus provoked and carried on would end in bloodshed, sooner or later. No appeal, no warning, from patriotic men in either section, could control or influence this spirit. It was persistent, uncompromising, vindictive, malignant, and apparently indifferent to consequences. It pursued its object steadily, and with a devotion that neither flagged nor faltered. Its purpose was the extermination of slavery, peaceably if possible, but if not, then through blood and carnage. It sought power, and demanded the control of the government, and it selected the means best calculated to secure the end, and upon the principle that the end justifies the means. It was insolent, overbearing, exacting in its

demands, and would be satisfied with nothing less than abject submission to its behests.

No appeals or remonstrances of Southern men were heeded. The dangers which were threatening the peace of the country excited neither alarm nor apprehension in the North, and things continued to grow worse, until war, with all its horrors, came upon the land and deluged it in blood.

But to go still further back in the history of the nation. The Convention which formed the Constitution left some important questions unsettled, which continued to be subjects of discussion from that day until the war was declared. As a general thing, the people of the South, and a large and influential party in the North, maintained the doctrine of States Rights, as taught in the celebrated Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions of 1798, and the Virginia report of '99. These masterly documents, the work of the greatest minds of their day in Virginia, inculcated the doctrine that the States were sovereign, and that the allegiance of the citizen therefore was due to his State; upon the principle that sovereign power and allegiance went together. The Federal Government being the result of the action of sovereign States, the citizen of the State occupied the relation of fidelity towards it, so long as his State remained one of the States of the Union. But when the State withdrew from the Union, then, according to the doctrines of the school of statesmen in which I was educated, I owed not only allegiance, but fidelity, to the State in which I was born and raised, and with which my interests and destiny were indissolubly united. If I had refused to go with her, and share her trials, I would have been guilty of treason in the eye of her law, which I had solemnly sworn to abide by and execute, as the Chief Magistrate of the Commonwealth. The language of the law is: "*Treason shall consist only in levying war against the State, or adhering to its enemies, giving them aid and comfort,*" &c.; and the penalty annexed is "*death.*" War had been levied by the United States against this State and the other States composing the late Confederacy. The meaning of the expression "*levying war,*" consists in collecting men for military purposes, as by enlistment, enrolment, or other means. I will illustrate it by quoting the 13th verse 5th chapter of 1st Kings: "And King Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel, and the levy was thirty thousand men." Before the State of Virginia passed her ordinance of Secession, Mr. Lincoln made a levy for 75,000 men, to prosecute war against the State of Virginia and the South; and I, as Governor of the Commonwealth, solemnly pledged to maintain and execute her laws, performed my duty faithfully and fully, in letter and in spirit. I did what my conscience approved, and I have no apology to make, no excuse to offer, for any of my official acts. Under the same circumstances, and with my views of duty sincerely and honestly entertained, I would again act precisely as I have done.

Then again the statute prohibited the citizen from "*adhering*" to the enemies of the State, and giving them "*aid and comfort.*" Could an officer of the Commonwealth, who had taken an oath to execute the laws of the Commonwealth, act otherwise than I did, during my official term?

The statute of Virginia prescribes the oaths to be taken by all persons elected to office, and they are: *First*, the oath of fidelity to the Commonwealth, and to support the Constitution of the State. *Second*, the anti-duelling oath; and *Third*, the oath to perform faithfully the duties of his office. He does not take an oath to support the Constitution of the United States, or to execute the laws of the United States. This then was the position occupied by the civil and other officers of the State at the time the war broke out, and I apprehend it will

be readily conceded that those officers fulfilled their obligations in adhering to the Commonwealth and her fortunes, and could not, under any circumstances, have acted otherwise, without dishonor and eternal disgrace.

The various party conventions, held for the nomination of candidates for the Presidency and vice-Presidency, for the past twenty years or more, have at some time or other, recognized the doctrine of State Rights, as inculcated in these resolutions and report. All parties, for years, concurred in the declaration that the only way in which the Union could be preserved was to uphold the rights of the States—that the advocacy and maintenance of State Rights, was the surest mode of preserving the Union of the States.

The Northern men who proclaimed these opinions, and who endorsed them, compose, in a great degree, the party now called Radical. Many of the most distinguished of their leaders have advocated, on the floors of Congress, and before their constituents, the doctrines so ably maintained in these celebrated State papers. Shortly after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, that measure was generally denounced, throughout the then free States, as a palpable violation of the Constitution of the United States. In several of those States they refused to execute it, or even to allow it to be executed by the officers of the Government—and at that time it was a very common thing to enulogize these resolutions and report, and to insist that the States had the right “*to judge of the mode and measure of redress,*” for so plain and palpable an infringement of their rights.

The people of Virginia believed that by their act of ratification of the Constitution of the United States, they had a right to repeal that act, (not for light or trivial causes,) but for good and substantial reasons, moving them thereto. And to show that they had some justification for that opinion, I present so much of the Act in question as bears upon this point :

We, the delegates of the people of Virginia, duly elected in pursuance of a recommendation from the General Assembly, and now met in Convention, having fully and freely investigated and discussed the proceedings of the Federal Convention, and being prepared as well as the most mature deliberation hath enabled us to decide thereon ; DO, in the name and in behalf of the people of Virginia, declare and make known, that the powers granted under the Constitution, being derived *from the people of the United States, may be resumed by them, whensoever the same shall be perverted to their injury or oppression ;* and that every power not granted thereby, remains with them, and at their will.

Here it is expressly declared, by the Convention, that they “DO, in the name and in behalf of the people of Virginia, declare and make known, that the powers granted under the Constitution being derived from the people of the United States, *may be resumed by them, whensoever the same shall be perverted to their injury or oppression,* and that every power not granted thereby, remains with them, and at their will.” These are the terms in which Virginia ratified the Constitution, and those terms were accepted, recognized, acted upon, and Virginia was thus received into the Union. Virginia declared that the powers might be resumed, when, in the judgment of her constituted authorities, those powers might be perverted or used to her injury or oppression. When, therefore, she undertook to repeal this act, and withdraw from the Union, she believed she was only exercising a right she had never surrendered or parted with. She did not consider that she was doing more than she had an undoubted right to do. She exercised a power which she believed unquestionable, and fully justified by the terms on which she had consented to form one of the States of the Union. She never expected the right to be questioned or controverted.

She believed that, "among parties having no common judge, each party has an equal right to judge for itself as well of infractions, as of the mode and measure of redress." Had she reason to apprehend that the powers thus granted, would be perverted to her injury or oppression when her Convention acted in April, 1861? Mr. Lincoln had been elected President of the United States—had entered upon the discharge of his public duties on the 4th of March, preceding the action of Virginia, through her Convention; and his opinions were well known, and universally understood throughout the land. He had publicly proclaimed, years before, in his canvass for the Senate with Judge Douglas; and after due consideration the sentiment had been repeatedly reiterated and most strenuously defended, that "a house divided against itself cannot stand." *"I believe this Government cannot endure permanently, half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new—North as well as South."*

The speech from which this quotation is made, was delivered at Springfield, Illinois, June 17th, 1858; and this sentiment was reiterated and defended throughout the canvass; which continued for more than four months. Mr. Lincoln was a gentleman of more than ordinary ability—a lawyer of distinction and experience, who had been long engaged in the active practice of his profession—a statesman who had filled various positions—State and Federal. He fully understood the force and meaning of the language he employed to convey his ideas. His speeches show great conciseness, clearness and point. His mind was practical—his language apposite—his mode of argumentation forcible and direct. Such a man, in enunciating the proposition I have quoted, had a meaning and a purpose, which was clearly understood by himself and which he designed should be as well understood by his hearers and readers. This paragraph indicates, in the clearest and most positive manner, Mr. Lincoln's hostility to slavery, and his desire for its extinction.

The house had been "*divided*" from 1789 to the day this sentiment was uttered, into *slave States* and *free States*. With this division, the Government had endured throughout that long period. The nation had increased in power and influence—its wealth had been greatly augmented—the Government was honored at home and respected abroad—the people were prosperous and happy—our territory had been greatly extended—our canvass whitened every ocean, and our flag commanded the respect of all the nations of the earth. Our population had increased to thirty millions—our commerce, coastwise and foreign, had increased in a much greater ratio—our country had made unexampled advances under the inspiring influence of that banner, which is borne upward and pressed onward, by the unseen, yet steady hand of PROGRESS.

It was under these circumstances, that Mr. Lincoln declared he expected the time to come, when "*the house would cease to be divided*"—when all would become *free*, or all would become *slave States*. Is not the inference irresistible, that with his opinions, thus expressed, in regard to the institution of slavery, he desired to see it removed— and if so, that he was prepared to use the means to accomplish an end, so much desired by himself and his party friends? Can it be doubted that he intended to impress upon them his views and wishes, in this

particular; and thus induce them to act in concert, and by united action, secure the desired result?

It was after this declaration of his views on this great question, that he was nominated for, and elected to the Presidency of the United States. Could there be a doubt as to the policy of his administration, so far as the institution of slavery was concerned? To doubt it, we should be compelled to discredit the sincerity of his declarations, the honesty of his purposes, and his convictions of moral and political duty. If, as a statesman, ardently attached to the Union and anxious to maintain it inviolate, believing that it could only be maintained by the spread of slavery over all the States, or by its removal from all, was it not his imperative duty to spare no efforts for its removal, and at the earliest practical moment? He was the President of the United States—duly inaugurated, and invested with all the power appertaining to this exalted position, and entertaining these views, had not the time arrived, when the people of Virginia might infer, nay, were not bound to believe, that “the powers granted under the Constitution, would be perverted to their *‘injury or oppression.’*” Had they not the right, therefore, to insist upon the terms of their bond, when they ratified the Federal Constitution? Had they not the right to resume those powers, and withdraw from the Union? Whether right or wrong, such was their opinion; and apprehending danger to the institution of slavery, an institution intimately interwoven with the frame-work of Virginia society, they acted upon it, and in the full conviction, that their own soil would furnish the chief battle ground in the war which was certain to follow.

Virginia has always been true to herself, and to honor. She has never been false to others. Her principles have always been frankly and candidly proclaimed—her action has been characterized by boldness, prudence and decision. Principle with her, has never been made subservient to policy. She has ever travelled the path blazed by duty and honor. She has, in her own judgment, been faithful to all the obligations she has assumed; and in all her action, connected with the recent troubles, she has pursued that course which was best calculated to do justice to all with whom she was united, and to uphold her reputation as “the honored mother of States and Statesmen.”

She cherished and honored the names of Jefferson and Madison—two of her most gifted and distinguished sons. She supposed the Virginia theory of States Rights was the accepted theory on this subject throughout the land. She had no right to doubt, but every reason to believe, that the professing Democrats of America, North and South, recognized the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions of '98 and the Virginia Report of '99, as embodying the true views on this question; and under this belief she took her position. How sadly was she disappointed. Northern men who had sworn by these Resolutions and Report for years, suddenly turned their backs upon them and openly repudiated the doctrines they had professed to believe. Numbers of them, who visited Virginia before the State seceded, rebuked her for her tardiness and urged that she should act at once—that her delay was producing mischievous results, and complicating matters to the prejudice of the South and to the hazard of the Union. Some of these men are now the most vindictive and relentless—the most uncompromising against the restoration of the Southern States to their rights in the Union. They seek to have us degraded and debased. They do not wish (in the language of President Johnson,) to see us return “*with all our manhood.*”

And here allow me to occupy a moment of your time in doing justice to that

great man, who, under the most trying circumstances, has exhibited an ability, a courage, a patriotism, and a devotion to principles, never surpassed in the history of a ruler, in ancient or modern times. He succeeded to the Presidency under the most embarrassing circumstances. He found a policy in existence that he had no hand in inaugurating. He stood before the world without a party organization to sustain him. He was residuary legatee to a cabinet that he had no voice in selecting. He found a congress hostile to him personally and politically. He stood alone, therefore, firm, decided, self-reliant, with entire confidence in the people, bearing aloft the banner of the Constitution and appealing to them to rally around him and aid him in restoring the Union. His confidence has not been misplaced. The people are rallying around him, and ere long we may hail the restoration of the Union as a "magic circle that will forever remain unbroken."

"May he live
Longer than I have time to tell his years!
Ever beloved, and loving may his rule be!
And when old Time shall lead him to his end,
Goodness and he fill up one monument."

Thus much I have deemed it my duty to say in defence of the action of Virginia. I might have referred to the views of Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet officers on the question of slavery and its abolition, with point and effect. But I forbear.

The South, having submitted the questions in controversy to the arbitrament of the sword, has been defeated. Her leaders and her armies have been compelled to succumb to superior numbers. Never in the history of the world, have leaders and men shown more heroism, more devotion, more courage, or endured greater privations and sacrifices in behalf of a cause, than the leaders and men constituting the late Confederate Army. And I will venture to add, that the struggle inspired respect and confidence between the officers and soldiers of both armies. Thus defeated—thus overcome—the Southern people regard the questions at issue as settled; and forever settled. They accept the result, and are prepared to abide by it in good faith. They pledge an honor that is untarnished; and when brave men and honest men give such a pledge, who can doubt their sincerity, and who can hesitate to believe that their pledge will be redeemed to the letter?

The civil strife of the last four years is ended. The din of arms has ceased. The character of the soldier is laid aside. The measured tread of the sentinel is no longer heard. The armies have been disbanded, and the soldiers have resumed the duties of citizens, devoting themselves to peaceful pursuits.

"No more the thirsty entrance of this soil
Shall daub her lips with her own children's blood;
No more shall trenching war channel her fields,
Nor bruise her flow'rets with the armed hoofs
Of hostile paces. Those opposed eyes,
Which—like the meteors of a troubled Heaven,
All of one nature, of one substance bred—
Did lately meet in the intestine shock
And furious close of civil butchery,
Shall now, in mutual, well beseeching ranks,
March all one way; and be no more oppos'd
Against acquaintance, kindred, and allies."

I must bring these remarks to a close. The war has terminated in bringing us all together and re-establishing the Union. In the present condition of affairs, high and holy duties devolve upon the people of all the States. If those duties are discharged with prudence and wisdom, and faithfully and honestly—if a spirit of kindness and conciliation shall be encouraged—if the past shall be forgotten, as it ought to be, under existing circumstances, then may we hope for union and harmony, and the revival of fraternal affection. No government can endure, which does not rest upon the affections of its people. A wise, just, tolerant, upright administration of public affairs, will win back the affections of the South and entwine them around the pillars that uphold the Union, as the “clasping ivy” encircles the majestic oak. Kindness begets kindness—confidence inspires confidence—charity and tolerance generate love and affection. Let all these ennobling virtues be cultivated and encouraged. If the scenes of the last four years cannot be forgotten by either side, let them at least be forgiven and passed by in solemn, dignified silence. Let each side cease to remind the other of the disagreeable incidents that occurred during that sad, but eventful period. Let us all turn our attention to the re-establishment of law and order throughout the land—to the revival of trade and business, foreign and domestic—let us all unite in a common effort, to secure a return of that prosperity, which characterized the nation in other and better days—and above all, let us by precept and example, inculcate a spirit of harmony between the States and the different sections of the country. As a Virginian, devotedly attached to the land in which I was born, and to the people who have honored me with their confidence, I say for myself and for them also, that we wish to see that line of policy adopted, which will bring peace, restore confidence, rouse up the energies of the people, stimulate production, develop the material resources of the whole country, extend commerce, and make the Government universally loved, honored and respected. It is our government, and duty demands this of us.

The chief cause of contention between the North and South has now been removed. How it was done, is a matter of no moment—it is sufficient for us to know, that it is an accomplished fact. The institution of slavery has been abolished. It no longer exists amongst us. Its abolition is fully recognized, understood and accepted. No one desires its re-establishment, or seeks to re-establish it. In the language of President Johnson, “the Southern States have come up magnanimously, and acknowledged the fact, and have gone into their State Conventions, and ratified its abolition.” We have therefore done everything to prove the sincerity of our professions, that can be reasonably demanded of us. We are all disposed to deal with things as we now find them, and so to deal with them, as to realize the largest amount of available good for ourselves and our posterity.

A majority in the two houses of Congress has denied representation to the people of the South. Let us not, however, despair on this account. An act so wrong in itself—so utterly indefensible, cannot be justified or excused, either on the score of principle or policy. This will correct itself, and ere long the people of the South will have their rights fully recognized. Let us be patient, and all will yet come right.

“When pressed by dangers and beset by foes,
The gods their timely succor interpose;
And when our virtue sinks, o’erwhelm’d with grief,
By unforeseen expedients bring relief.”

Let us then be of good cheer. Let no one be disheartened or discouraged. We must all do our duty, in a faithful, independent and manly way, and then we may reasonably anticipate a bright and happy future for ourselves, our posterity and our country.

It should be the policy of all to inculcate a spirit of concord, and so act, each to the other, as to advance the common interests of all. We should do everything in our power to secure the prosperity of the nation, augment its wealth, develop its boundless mineral and other resources, rouse up its dormant energies, multiply its channels of intercommunication, encourage agricultural, mechanical and manufacturing industry. This is due to ourselves, as well as those who are to come after us, and who look to us for the adoption of a policy that will place them before the world in the most advantageous position. Let us deal candidly, fairly, honestly, justly and charitably, one with another, and then kneeling around the altar of a common country, let a united prayer ascend to Heaven—"GOD BLESS AMERICA."

[Here the Statue was unveiled, amidst great cheering.]

Our work is accomplished. The Statue is re-established, and again occupies the position to which it was assigned by the General Assembly of Virginia in its Joint Resolution of 1856. There let it remain as long as the Virginia Military Institute shall endure—admonishing us in the first place, that we are mortal, and assuring us in the next place, that a virtuous life, a faithful discharge of public and private duty, a strict adherence to principle, a practical observance of liberality, generosity, kindness and magnanimity—all of which characterized Washington in a most eminent degree, will win for those who take him as their model, the love and affection, the respect and confidence of their countrymen.

And now it only remains for me to commit this noble work to the protection, care and guardianship of the Superintendent, Professors and Cadets of the Virginia Military Institute. The State commits this sacred trust to your keeping, in the full conviction that it will be guarded with the most scrupulous fidelity.

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